

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 ACDA-12 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7566
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION GENEVA
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

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USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, MOPS, PINS, AG, SS, MO, MR
SUBJ: SAHARA: FURTHER VIEWS OF SLIMANE HOFFMAN

REF: ALGIERS 2809

1. SUMMARY: ON NOV 16, PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER SLIMANE HOFFMAN EXPRESSED FOLLOWING OPINIONS ON SAHARA PROBLEM: A. ATMOSPHERE OF WAR DOES NOT SEEM TO EXIST BETWEEN ALGERIA AND MOROCCO OVER SAHARA AT MOMENT. B. POLISARIO INCAPABLE OF MILITARY VICTORY UNTIL SUCH TIME AS MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN REGIMES CRUMBLE. C. ARAB AND OAU MEDIATION EFFORTS UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED, AND ONLY PROSPPECT FOR PEACE IS NEGOTIATION OF FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL ISSUES. D. ALGERIAN ARE PROVIDING CONFIDENTIAL

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TRAINING, FINANCING AND EQUIPMENT TO POLISARIO, BUT HAS NO ONE PRESENT INSIDE SAHARA AND POLISARIO INDEPENDENT TO ACT ON OWN. E. ALGERIA

COULD BE MOBILIZED FOR WAR WITHIN 24 HOURS AND, SINCE GOA MADE CONTINGENCY PREPARATIONS SOME TIME AGO, THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECENT ALGERIAN TROOP OR EQUIPMENT MOVEMENTS IN FRONTIER REGION. F. FRENCH ARE PRINCIPAL VILLAINS IN PIECE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN NOVEMBER 16 INTERVIEW WITH WESTERN JOURNALIST AND EMBOFF, ALGERIAN PRESIDENTIAL COUNSELOR SLIMANE HOFFMAN DISCUSSED VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SAHARA PROBLEM AT SOME LENGTH. HOFFMAN'S REMARKS ARE OF SIGNIFICANCE IN THAT HE IS CONSIDERED ONE OF PRINCIPAL ARCHITECTS OF ALGERIAN-POLISARIO MILITARY STRATEGY IN SAHARA. PRINCIPAL POINTS HE MADE FOLLOW:

3. PROSPECTS FOR ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN WAR: HOFFMAN SAID HE DID NOT SENSE AN ATMOSPHERE OF WAR. CONTRARY TO CERTAIN REPORTS, THERE WERE NO ALGERIAN MILITARY CONVOYS MOVING SOUTH. SUCH PREPARATIONS WERE NOT NECESSARY AS ALGERIA HAD TAKEN NEEDED MILITARY PRECAUTIONS LONG AGO AND WAS NOW READY FOR ANY EVENTUALITY.

4. WITH RESPECT TO PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION, POLISARIO WAS NOT IN POSITION TO IMPOSE MILITARY SOLUTION. THERE HAD BEEN SOME MOROCCAN RETREATS: BIR LAHLOU, FOR EXAMPLE, IS NOW EMPTY, AND POLISARIO HAD CAPTURED HAWZA, AT LEAST FOR SHORT TIME. HOWEVER, MOROCCANS STILL CONTROL JDERIA FARTHER TO WEST (NOTE: POLISARIO AND ALGERIAN MEDIA HAVE BEEN CLAIMING FOR PAST MONTH OR SO THAT JDERIA NOW IN POLISARIO HANDS). FINAL POLISARIO VICTORY WILL ONLY COME AFTER LONG STRUGGLE AND WITH DOWNFALL OF MAURITANIAN AND MOROCCAN REGIMES. MAURITANIA IS ALREADY DEAD POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND INSTITUTIONALLY, AND MOROCCO, WITH A KING WHO IS ON THE WAY OUT, IS CURMBLING.

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5. SOLUTION TO CONFLICT LIES IN BASIC POLITICAL ELEMENTS OF PROBLEM. THERE ARE TWO OR THREE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS WHICH SUGGEST THEMSELVES, BUT MOROCCANS WILL HAVE NO PART OF NEGOTIATION. (HOFFMAN DID NOT ELABORATE ON THESE ASSERTIONS.)

6. IF THERE IS WAR, IT WILL ENFLAME ENTIRE REGION FROM SENEGAL TO ITALY, AND IF MOROCCANS WIN DANGEROUS PRECEDENT OF BREACHING COLONIAL BOUNDARIES WILL HAVE BEEN SET. EXAMPLE WILL LEAD SHAR OF IRAN TO ATTACK GULF STATES, AND LIBYA WILL LEAP INTO NORTHERN CHAD.

7. MEDIATION: PROSPECTS FOR MEDIATION DIM AS NO ARAB LEADER HAS MORAL AUTHORITY TO BRING ABOUT SOLUTION. MUBARAK IS A ZERO WHOSE ONLY APPEAL WAS FOR ALGERIANS AND MOROCCANS TO FORGET THEIR DIFFERENCES AND CONCENTRATE ON LARGER STRUGGLE TO THE EAST. AS FOR SAUDIS, FAISAL HAD BEEN "REAL KING" BUT KHALID, LIKE SADAT, NOTHING MORE THAN TOOL OF AMERICANS. BOURGUIBA IS A "NICE OLD MAN" BUT HAS SOLD OUT TO FRENCH. HIS CALL FOR INTERCESSION BY "ARAB WISE MEN" MISPLACED BECAUSE, AFTER ALL, "WHERE ARE THESE WISE MEN" OAU OFFERED MORE HOPE BUT WAS "MANIPULATED" BY FRENCH.

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8. ALGERIA AND THE POLISARIO: ALGERIA PROVIDES POLISARIO MILITARY TRAINING, FINANCES AND LIGHT EQUIPMENT, BUT POLISARIO IS NONTHELESS INDEPENDENT. ALGERIANS DO NOT INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN ANY DISPUTES WHICH MAY OCCUR WITHIN POLISARIO, AN ORGANIZATION WHICH IN ANY CASE HAS SUFFICIENT INTERNAL DISCIPLINE SO THAT IT SPEAKS TO WORLD WITHOUT VOICE. NO ALGERIANS ARE FIGHTING IN SAHARA: GOA HAS IDENTIFIED ALLEGED ALGERIAN PRISONER INTERVIEWED SOME TIME AGO IN NOUAKCHOTT AS IMPOSTER SINCE NUMBER OF IDENTITY CARD WHICH HE PRESENTED WAS ONE WHICH WILL NOT BE USED UNTIL 1982.

9. WITH RESPECT TO POLISARIO WEAPONRY, GUERRILLAS ARE USING MODERN WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT CAPTURED FROM MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS. SOME SUCH ITEMS ARE TRUCKS AND 106MM RECOLESS RIFLES.

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10. ALGERIA'S OVERRIDING MILITARY CONCERN IN SAHARA IS SECURITY OF

ALGERIAN FRONTIERS.

11. FRENCH ROLE: WITHOUT FRENCH SUPPORT, MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN DEMISE WOULD BE SPEEDED, AND IN ANY CASE, MOROCCANS WOULD NOT BE SO AGGRESSIVE. HOT PURSUIT WAS ORIGINALLY FRENCH DOCTRINE, AND IT IS THIS CONCEPT WHICH COULD PRODUCE FIGHTING BETWEEN ALGERIA AND MOROCCO.

SHOULD WAR COME, ALGERIANS WILL CUT FRANCE OFF" (IMPLICATION HERE WAS THAT ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WOULD BE ENDED.).

12. REFUGEES: NUMBER OF SAHARAUI REFUGEES IN TINDOUF REGION IS AROUND 80,000. FIGURE FLUCTUATES SOMEWHAT WITH ARRIVALS AND EPAR-TURES FROM CAMPS. AT PRESENT, ICRC "OWES" LARGE SUM OF MONEY TO ALG-ERIAN RED CRESCENT FOR MAINTENANCE OF REFUGEES.

13. NEW STYLE OF GUERRILLA WAR: POLISARIO (PRESUMABLY WITH ALGER-IAN ASSISTANCE) IS IN PROCESS OF DEVELOPING NEW GUERRILLA WAR DOC-TRINE APPLICABLE TO DESERT WARFARE. SAHARA WAR IS FIRST GUERRILLA

CONFLICT TO BE FOUGHT IN DESERT, AND NEW COMBAT TECHNIQUES HAVE HAD TO BE DEVISED.

14. COMMENT: WE AGREE WITH HOFFMAN THAT POLISARIO IS NOT CAPABLE OF WINNING MILITARY VICTORY IN SAHARA UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW GUERRILLAS COULD MOVE CONFLICT ABOVE ITS PRESENT LEVEL OF STALEMATE WITHOUT MASSIVE ALGERIAN ASSISTANCE.

15. TWO OF HOFFMAN'S OTHER ASSERTIONS ARE LESS EASY TO ACCEPT. FIRST, PICTURE OF ALGERIAN PARTICIPATION IN OPERATIONS WITHIN SAHARA IS NOT CLEAR. WE HAVE HAD SEVERAL SEEMINGLY PLAUSIBLE REPORTS INDIC-ATING THAT ALGERIAN ARMY PERSONNEL ARE OPERATING INSIDE FORMER COL-CONFIDENTIAL

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ONLY AND EVEN THAT ALGERIAN FAMILIES HAVE RECEIVED BACK BODIES OF RELATIVES KILLED IN ACTION WITHIN SAHARA. ON THE OTHER HAND, A GOOD FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCE TOLD US RECENTLY THAT, SINCE AMGHALA CLASHES IN EARLY 1976, NEITHER FRENCH NOR MOROCCANS HAVE FOUND A SINGLE ALGERIAN SOLDIER OPERATING INSIDE SAHARA.

16. SECONDLY, IT APPEARS QUITE SURE THAT, CONTRARY TO WHAT HOFFMAN SAID, ALGERIAN ARMY HAS IN FACT MOVED TO A HIGHER STATE OF ALERT DURING COURSE OF FALL. ALGIERS 2809 DOCUMENTS EVIDENCE WHICH HAS LED US TO THIS CONCLUSION. ALSO, WE NOTE THAT CERTAIN ALGERIAN ARMY RESERVE OFFICERS HAVE BEEN ASKED TO PRESENT THEMSELVES TO THE AUTH-ORITIES FOR "RETRAINING."

17. HOFFMAN'S REMARKS, AND COMMENTS FROM OTHER SOURCES, MAKE IT APPEAR THAT THE ALGERIANS AND EGYPTIAN VICE PRESIDENT MUBARAK DID NOT HIT IT OFF WELL DURING LATTER'S SAHARA MEDIATION ATTEMPT EAR-LIER THIS MONTH.HAYNES

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